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Out-of-state waste package sent to governor

Lansing – The Michigan Senate today passed sweeping restrictions on the importation of Canadian and out-of-state waste, set a two-year moratorium on new landfills, and gave broader authority to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to enforce these tougher garbage standards.

“Our goal with this legislation is simple: we want to protect Michigan’s environment and preserve it for future generations,” said Sen. Tony Stamas, R-Midland.

This legislative package represents a bi-partisan effort to limit the importation of Canadian and out-of-state waste. Canadian and out-of-state-waste accounts for approximately 25 percent of all trash entering Michigan’s landfills.

The bills provide a comprehensive revision of the state’s solid-waste management laws to include additional protections against the disposal of inappropriate waste in Michigan’s landfills. The new rules require all Canadian and out-of-state waste to meet the same stringent standards Michigan has for its own waste. Landfills would be required to refuse any out-of-state waste that did not meet the tough standards.

The bills:

- Require the state Department of Environmental Quality to provide a statewide inspection program, which would mandate at least four inspections each year of each landfill to ensure compliance. Random inspections also could be conducted to help ensure compliance.

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- Require landfills to refuse waste, regardless of its source, that did not meet Michigan's stringent waste standards, starting Oct. 1, 2004.
- Add two important new landfill bans – beverage containers and whole tires – to further reduce reliance on landfills and encourage recycling.
- Grant the DEQ director emergency power to prohibit any waste shipment that poses a threat to the public's health or safety or to the safety of the environment.
- Add new fines of up to \$25,000 per day for violating certain laws related to disposing of waste in landfills.
- Mandate a two-year moratorium on issuing certain new landfill permits.

"I'm glad to see this legislation moving," Stamas said. "I look forward to seeing these bills strengthening our standards signed into law."

Nine of the 11 bills now go to the governor for signing. Senate Bill 498 and House Bill 5235 have been sent back to the House for concurrence.

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Comments from Sen. Stamas on out-of-state waste are available for download on the Senate Majority Audiowire at www.senate.michigan.gov/gop.